



46 | \$2.25 US
\$3.25 CAN
SEP 98

JAMES
ROBINSON
GENE
HA

STARMAN™

**TIMES
PAST**

**GOOD MEN
AND BAD:
1954**



7-98

I can't say I was friends with Bennetti.

Jake.

Bobo.

Whatever you want to call him.

...I called him not at all.

That is not to say I wouldn't have, but the poor fellow knew more of jail cells than he did blue skies and Deco spires.

But there was one time.

One time...

YOU'RE THE **SHADE**. BIG-TIME VILLAIN. SHADOW POWERS.

AND YOU'RE **MR. BENNETTI**. BIG-TIME VILLAIN. SUPER STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY.



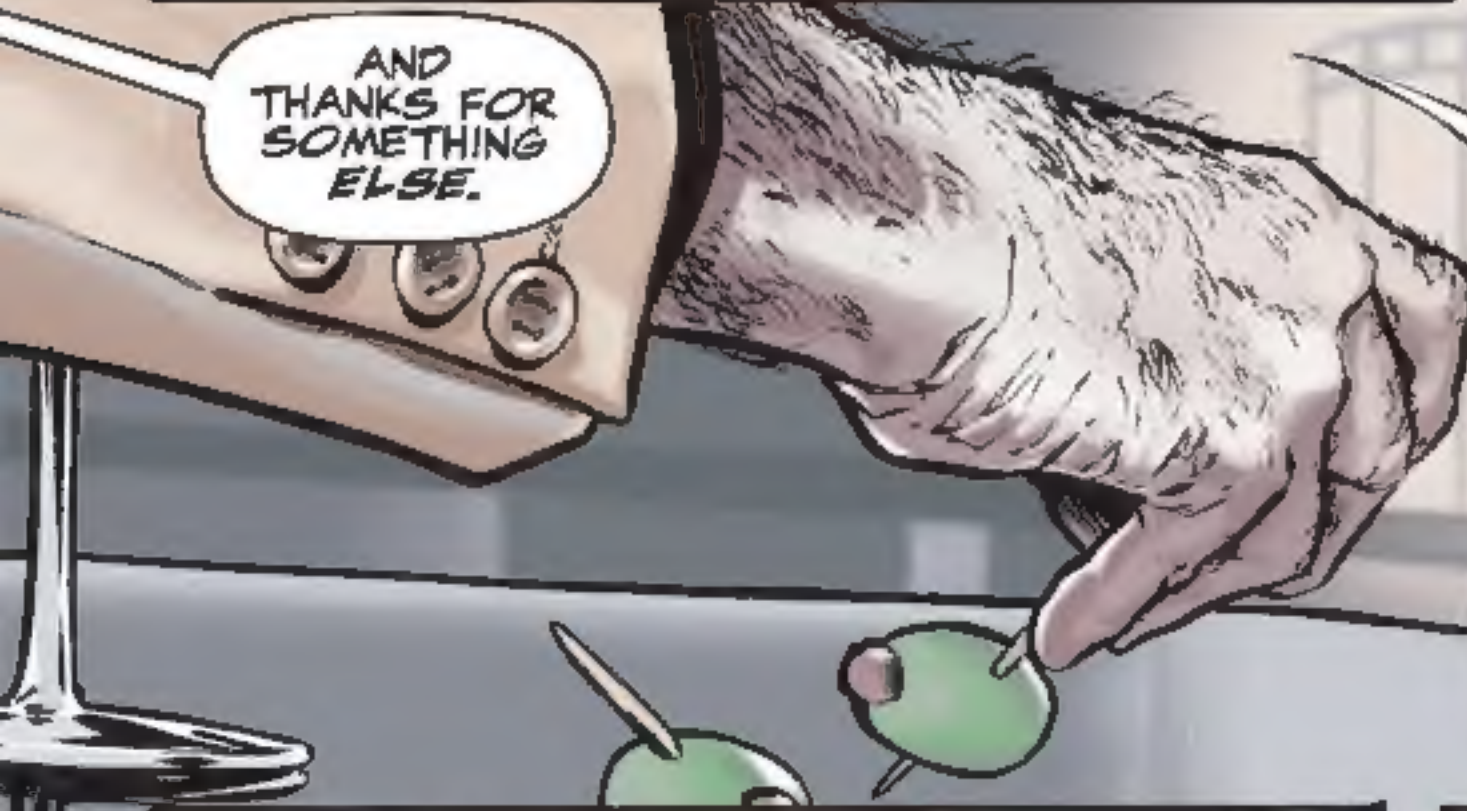
THANKS,
PALLY.

FOR
WHAT?



FOR CALLING
ME MR. BENNETTI.
SOME CATS
PRESUME THEY'RE
MY BUD. THEY
CALL ME JAKE
STRAIGHT OFF.

OR
WORSE
STILL THEY
CALL ME
BOBO.



AND
THANKS FOR
SOMETHING
ELSE.



hmm?

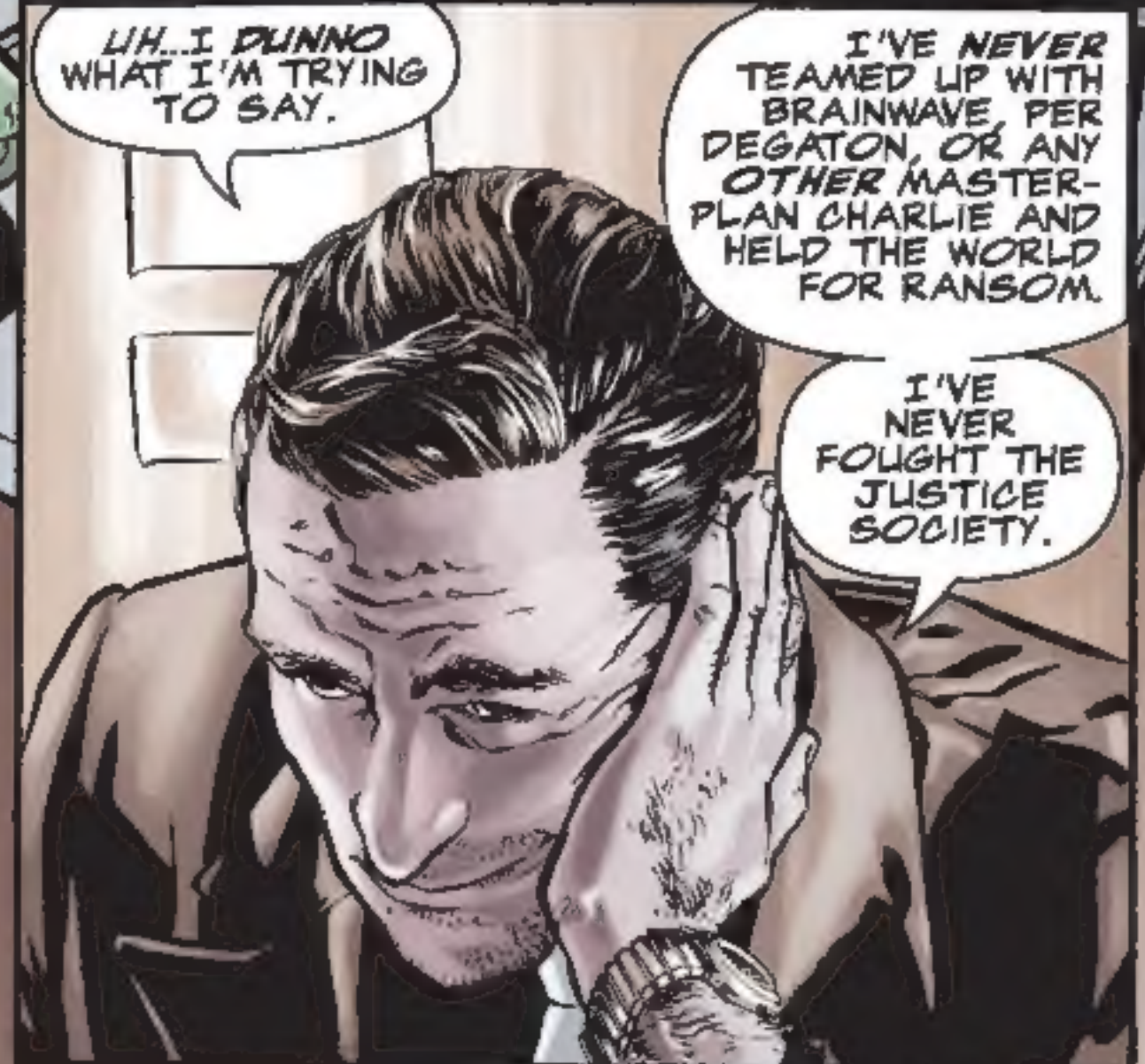
FOR
CALLING ME
"BIG TIME."



ME, I KNOW
WHAT I AM. A
SCRAPPER.
TOUGH. THE
JESTER IS STILL
COUNTING HIS
BRUISES FROM A
JOB I PULLED
LAST WEEK.

BUT...

...BANK JOBS...
MY KIND,
SMALL, SMASH
AND GRAB,
PUNCH AND RUN.
IT'S ALL...



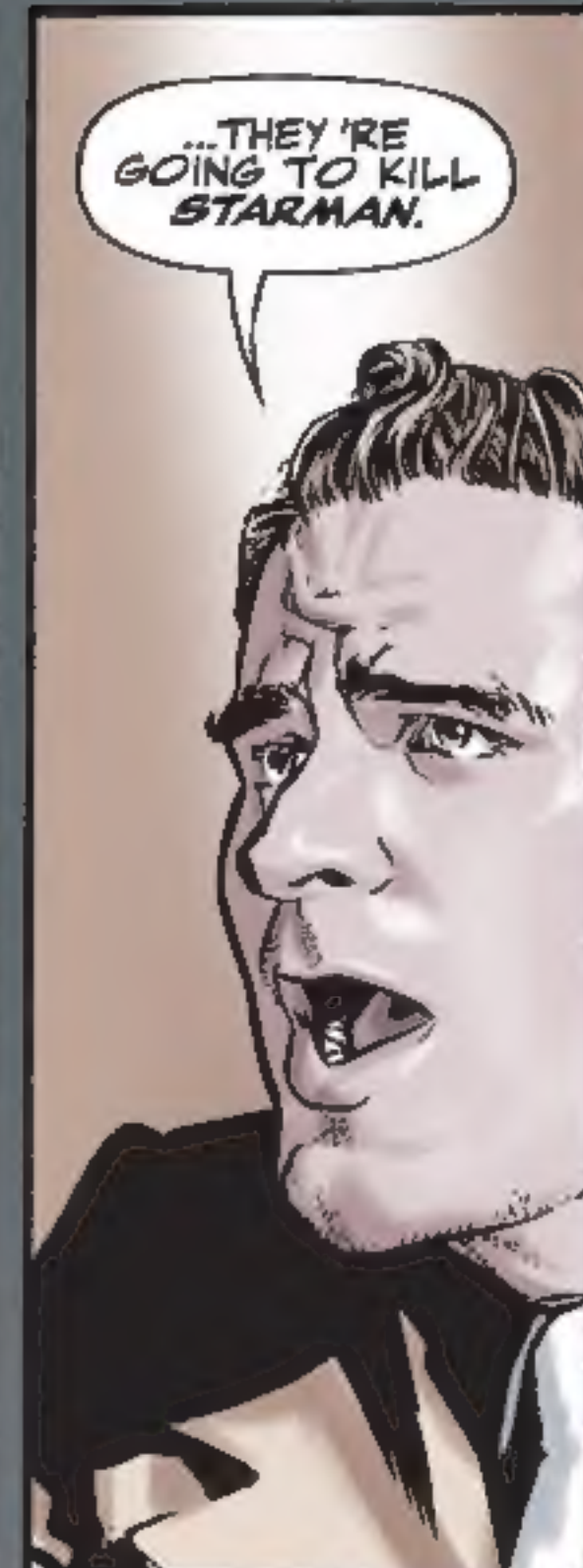
UH...I DUNNO
WHAT I'M TRYING
TO SAY.

I'VE NEVER
TEAMED UP WITH
BRAINWAVE, PER
DEGATON, OR ANY
OTHER MASTER-
PLAN CHARLIE AND
HELD THE WORLD
FOR RANSOM.

I'VE
NEVER
FOUGHT THE
JUSTICE
SOCIETY.



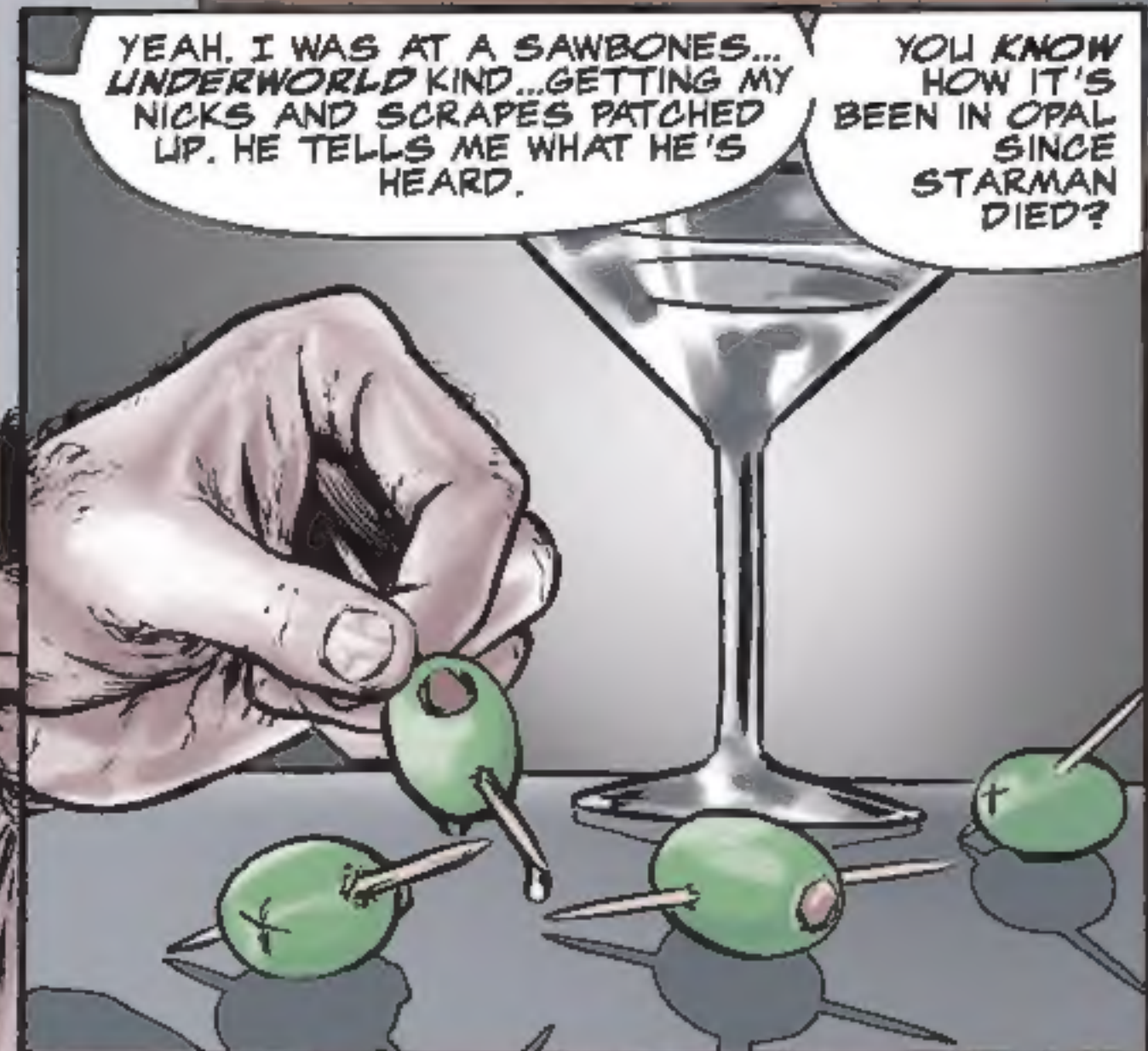
IT'S...NOT
EVERYTHING IT'S
CRACKED UP
TO BE.





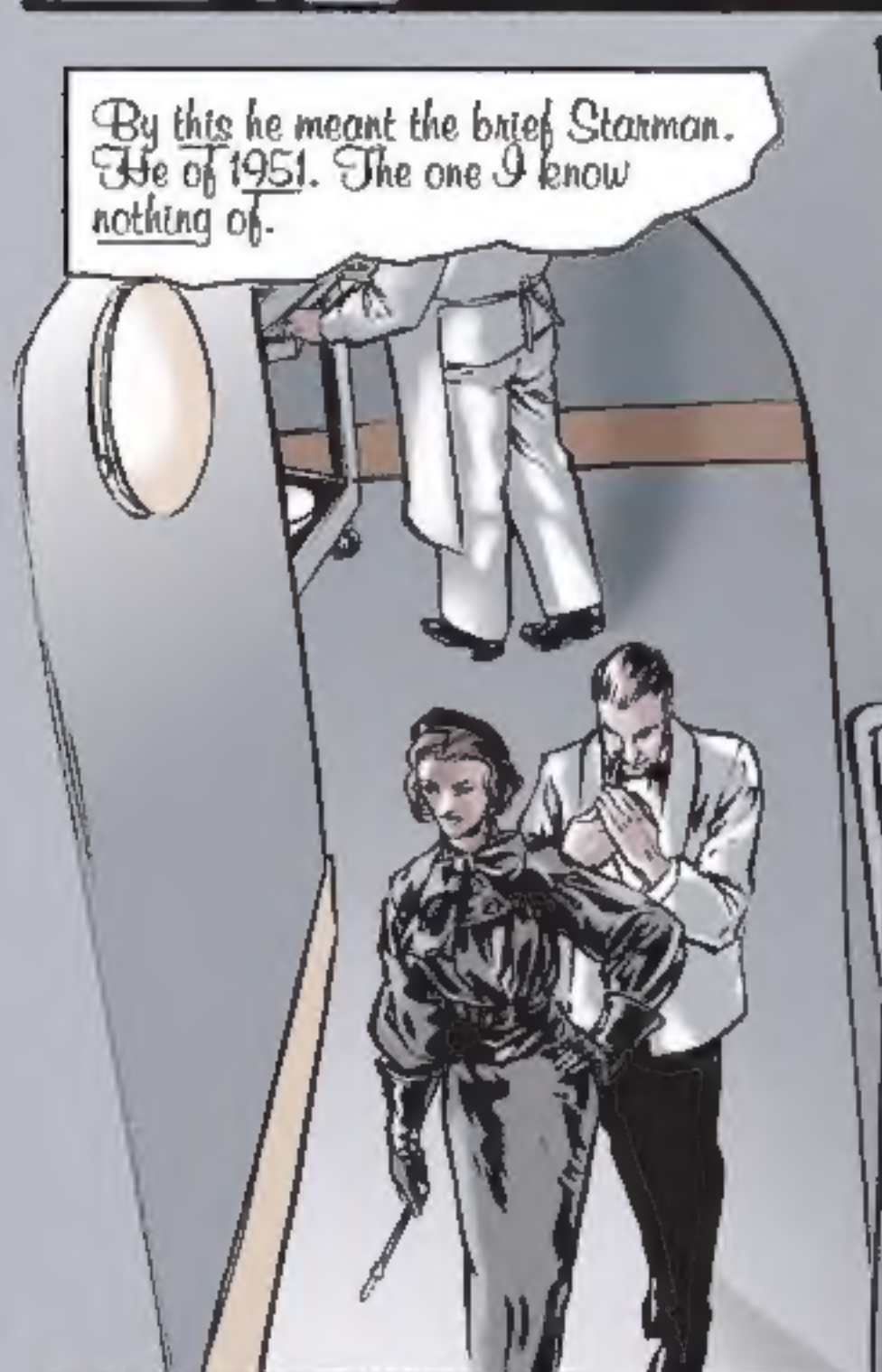
I GUESS I'D BETTER START AT THE BEGINNING. IT WAS AFTER THAT FIGHT I TOLD YOU ABOUT.

THE JESTER?

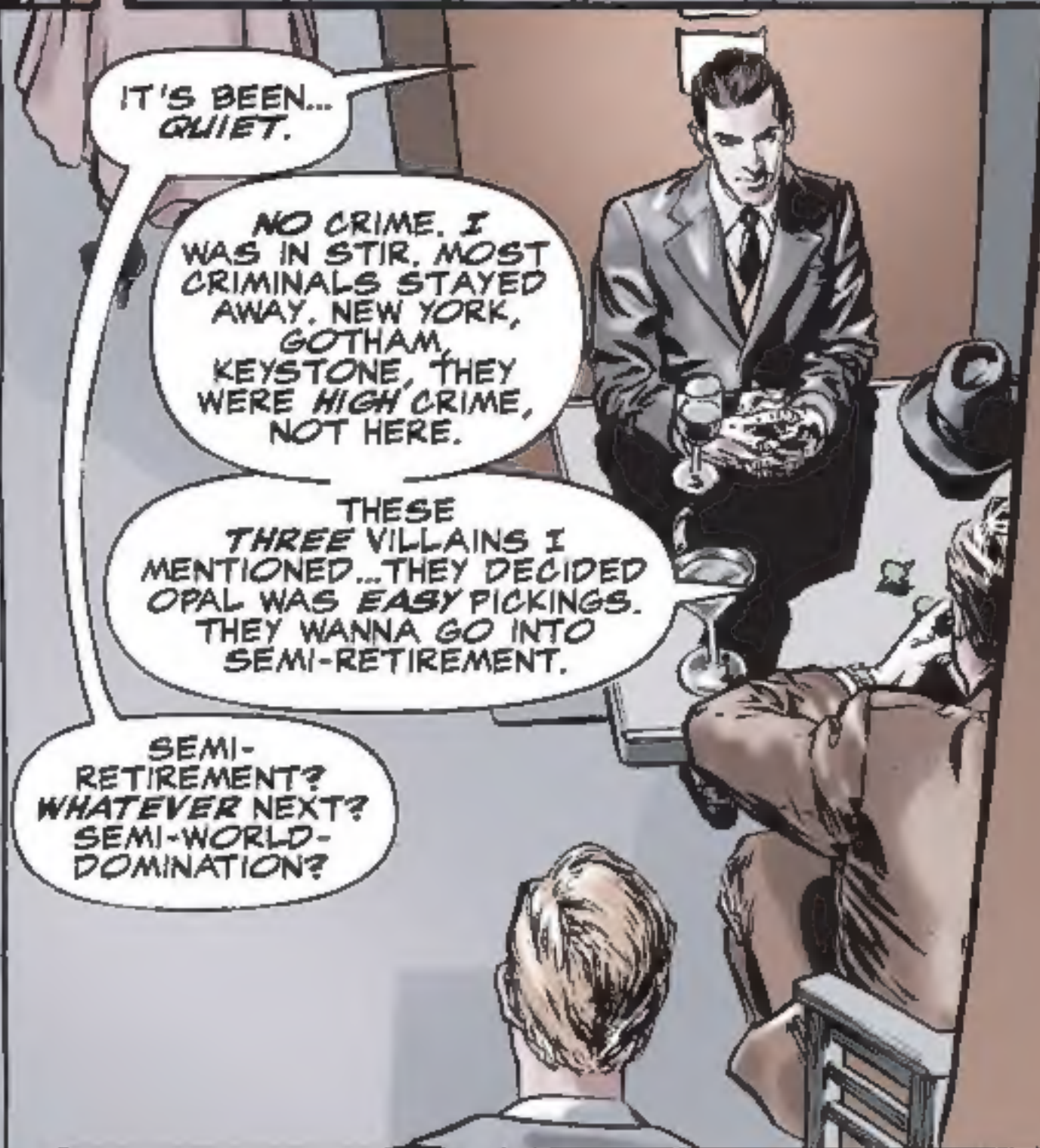


YEAH. I WAS AT A SAWBONES... UNDERWORLD KIND...GETTING MY NICKS AND SCRAPES PATCHED UP. HE TELLS ME WHAT HE'S HEARD.

YOU KNOW HOW IT'S BEEN IN OPAL SINCE STARMAN DIED?



By this he meant the brief Starmán. He of 1951. The one I know nothing of.



IT'S BEEN... QUIET.

NO CRIME. I WAS IN STIR. MOST CRIMINALS STAYED AWAY. NEW YORK, GOTHAM, KEYSTONE, THEY WERE HIGH CRIME, NOT HERE.

THESE THREE VILLAINS I MENTIONED...THEY DECIDED OPAL WAS EASY PICKINGS. THEY WANNA GO INTO SEMI-RETIREMENT.

SEMI-RETIREMENT? WHATEVER NEXT? SEMI-WORLD-DOMINATION?



THESE GUYS ARE ALL GETTING OLDER. TIMES ARE CHANGING. MAYBE THAT MAKES THEM SMARTER THAN ME OR YOU.



HAVING MET THEM, I SINCERELY DOUBT THAT. ANYWAY, HOW DOES THIS EQUATE TO KILLING STARMAN?



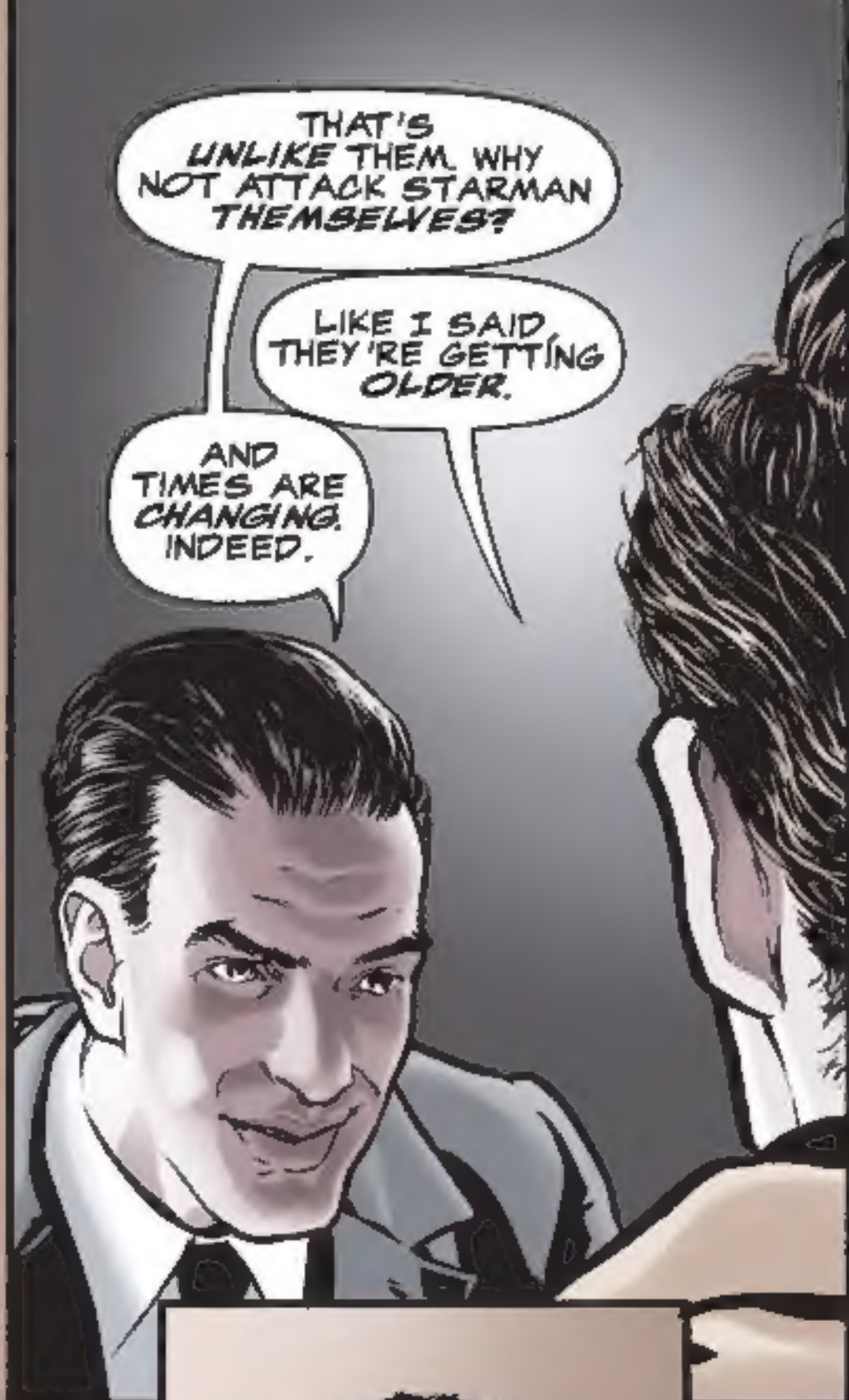
WELL, THE RED AND GREEN, HE WAS GONE, BUT NOW HE'S BACK.

YES, AND BRIGHTER THAN EVER.



WELL, THESE GUYS WOULD PREFER A CITY THAT STAYED DARK.

THEY'VE HIRED MEN. TORPEDOES TO DO THE HIT.



THAT'S UNLIKE THEM. WHY NOT ATTACK STARMAN THEMSELVES?

LIKE I SAID THEY'RE GETTING OLDER.

AND TIMES ARE CHANGING, INDEED.



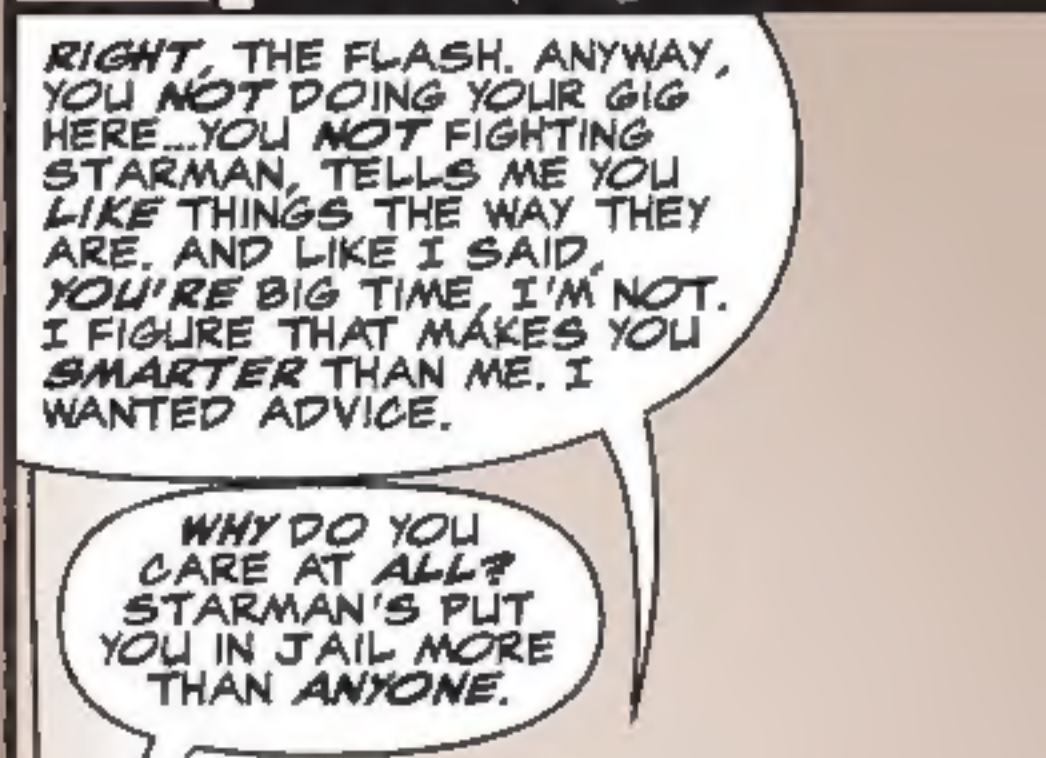
SO, YOU'VE TOLD ME A TALE. BUT WHAT IS IT TO YOU OR ME?



WELL, I KNOW YOU'RE AN OPAL BOY. AND YOU'VE NEVER FOUGHT STARMAN...YOU DO YOUR CRIMES OUT OF STATE. YOU FIGHT JOHNNY QUICK.

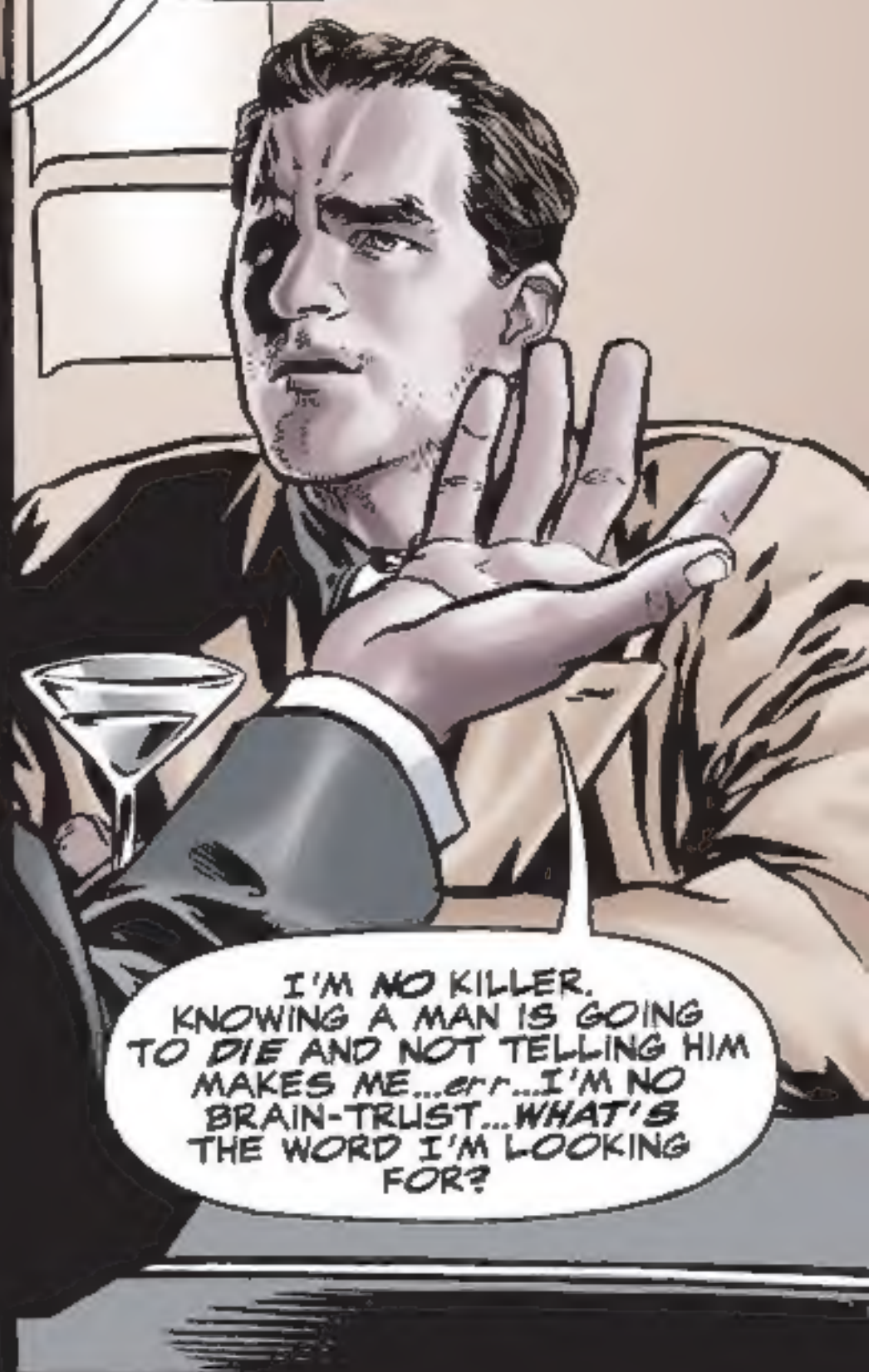


THE FLASH.



RIGHT, THE FLASH. ANYWAY, YOU NOT DOING YOUR GIG HERE...YOU NOT FIGHTING STARMAN, TELLS ME YOU LIKE THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE. AND LIKE I SAID, YOU'RE BIG TIME, I'M NOT. I FIGURE THAT MAKES YOU SMARTER THAN ME. I WANTED ADVICE.

WHY DO YOU CARE AT ALL? STARMAN'S PUT YOU IN JAIL MORE THAN ANYONE.



I'M NO KILLER. KNOWING A MAN IS GOING TO DIE AND NOT TELLING HIM MAKES ME...err...I'M NO BRAIN-TRUST...WHAT'S THE WORD I'M LOOKING FOR?





...events were unfolding elsewhere.

But across town events were unfolding like toilet paper.

(An aside, gentle readers... has a metaphor surprised you even as you wrote it? Such is the case with the one above. Suffice it to say...)



YOU CAN NOT THINK I'M THAT RUSTY.

THREE GOONS IN COSTUMES AND MASKS DO NOT SUPERVILLAINS MAKE.

AND WHAT KIND OF A NAME IS THE GO-LIGHTLY GANG?



GUNS? IS THAT AS GOOD AS IT GETS FOR--

It happened quickly, I imagine.

...in the heat of battle, things usually do.



A SOUND. BELLS AND...

HAHAHE EHEHEH! STARMAN!...

...BEHIND YOU!

GOOD MEN and BAD:1952

*A Tale of
Times Past*

THERE
WERE *FOUR*
OF THEM!

**HAHA
HAH!**

JAMES ROBINSON - writer
GENE HA - artist & colorist
BILL OAKLEY - letterer
DIGITAL CHAMELEON - separator
CHUCK KIM - assistant editor
PETER TOMASI - editor
ARCHIE GOODWIN - guiding light



He was a dervish then. A high squealing laugh amidst capering combat.

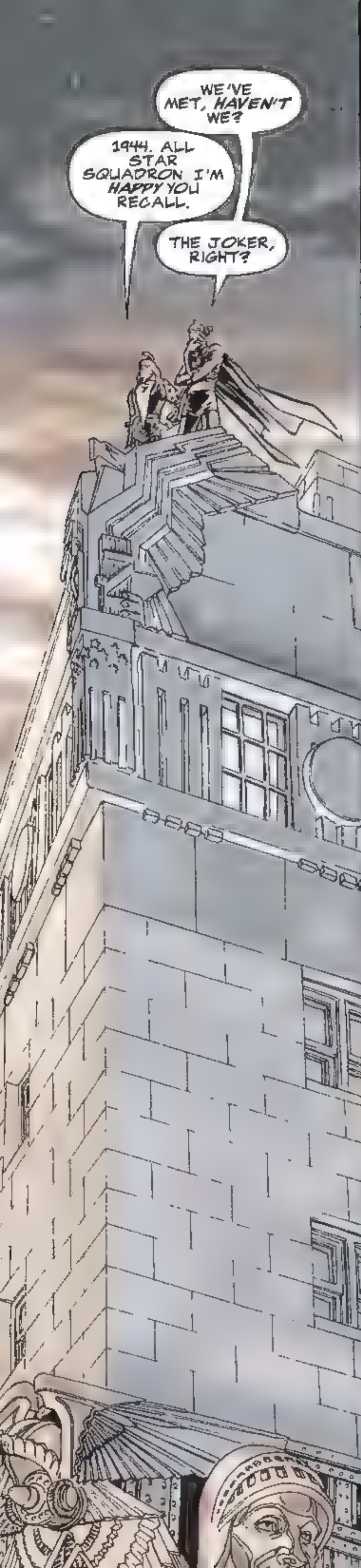
Once feared by criminals for being so...so...

...strange.

He's largely forgotten now.

A pity.





WE'VE
MET, HAVEN'T
WE?

1944. ALL
STAR
SQUADRON I'M
HAPPY YOU
RECALL.

THE JOKER,
RIGHT?

THE
JESTER.

OF COURSE.
SILLY OF ME TO
GUESS OTHER-
WISE.

WHAT
BRINGS YOU
TO OPAL?

IT'S A
BEAUTIFUL
CITY.

AND WHY
ELSE?

BOBO BENNETTI.
HE ROBBED A FACTORY
OF ITS PAYROLL IN
FLATBLUSH, NEW YORK. I
MEAN TO TAKE HIM
BACK THERE.

NO
JOKE.

NO.
ALTHOUGH...

...THERE
IS A
PUNCHLINE.

THIS IS ALL
RATHER *SUDDEN*, ISN'T
IT? I *HARDLY* KNOW YOU
AND YOU *SHOW* ME YOUR
FACE.

I *FIGURE* WE'VE
BEEN AT IT TOO LONG
TO KEEP OUR
IDENTITIES *SECRET*.
CONSIDER IT MY *ACT*
OF GOOD FAITH...



...TED
KNIGHT.



HOW DID YOU
FIND OUT? DID *ONE*
OF MY *CIRCLE* OF
HEROES TALK?

NO. I'M GOOD
WITH *CLUES* IS ALL.
I'M REALLY POLICE
DETECTIVE *CHARLES*
LANE.



PLAINCLOTHES?

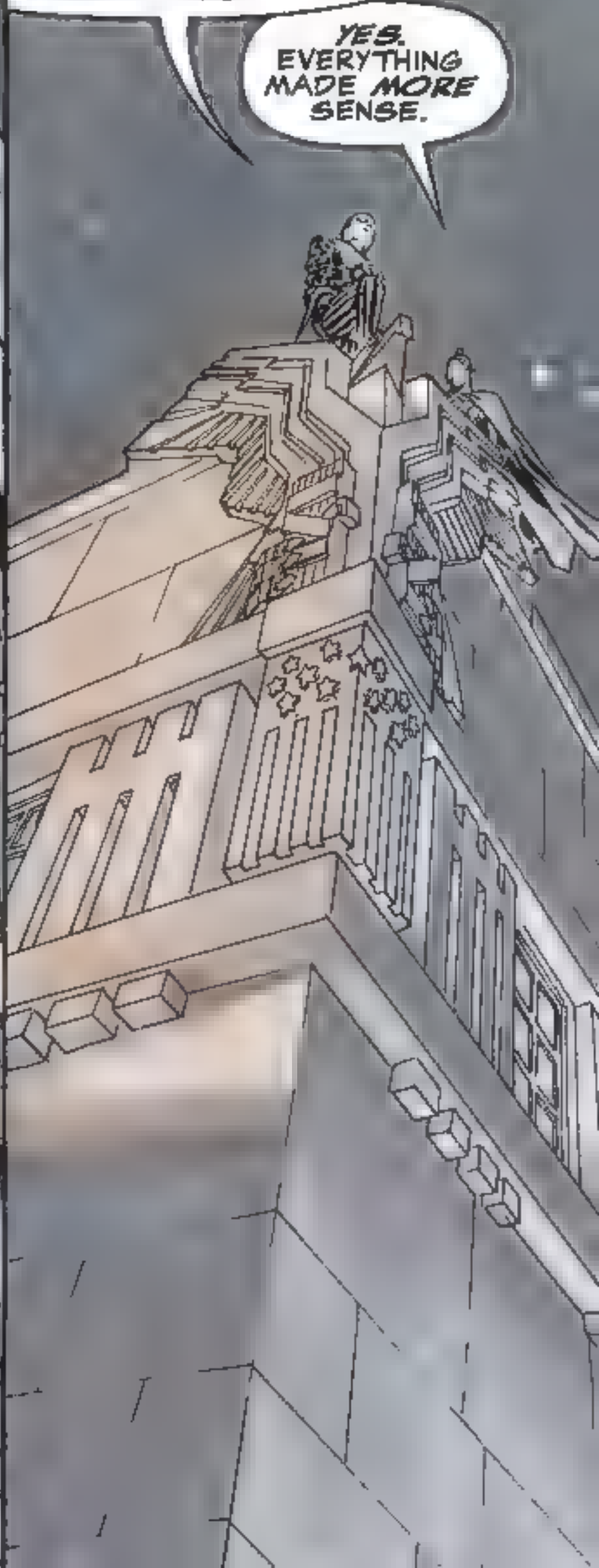
YEAH. AND THERE'S A LOT
TO BE SAID FOR *PLAIN*
CLOTHES.

THIS...SUPERHEROICS...IS
GROWING *TIRED*. A YEAR...
MAYBE *LESS* AND I'M *DONE*
WITH THE BELLS AND
TRICKERY. I'M GETTING *OLD*...
AND TOO RESPONSIBLE...
RESPECTABLE.



...WHEN I *FIRST* STARTED...
AS *PATROLMAN* *CHUCK*
LANE...BACK WHEN *EVERY*...
ONE WITH A *GIMMICK* WAS
SLIPPING INTO *BRIGHT*
LONG JOHNS--

YES.
EVERYTHING
MADE *MORE*
SENSE.

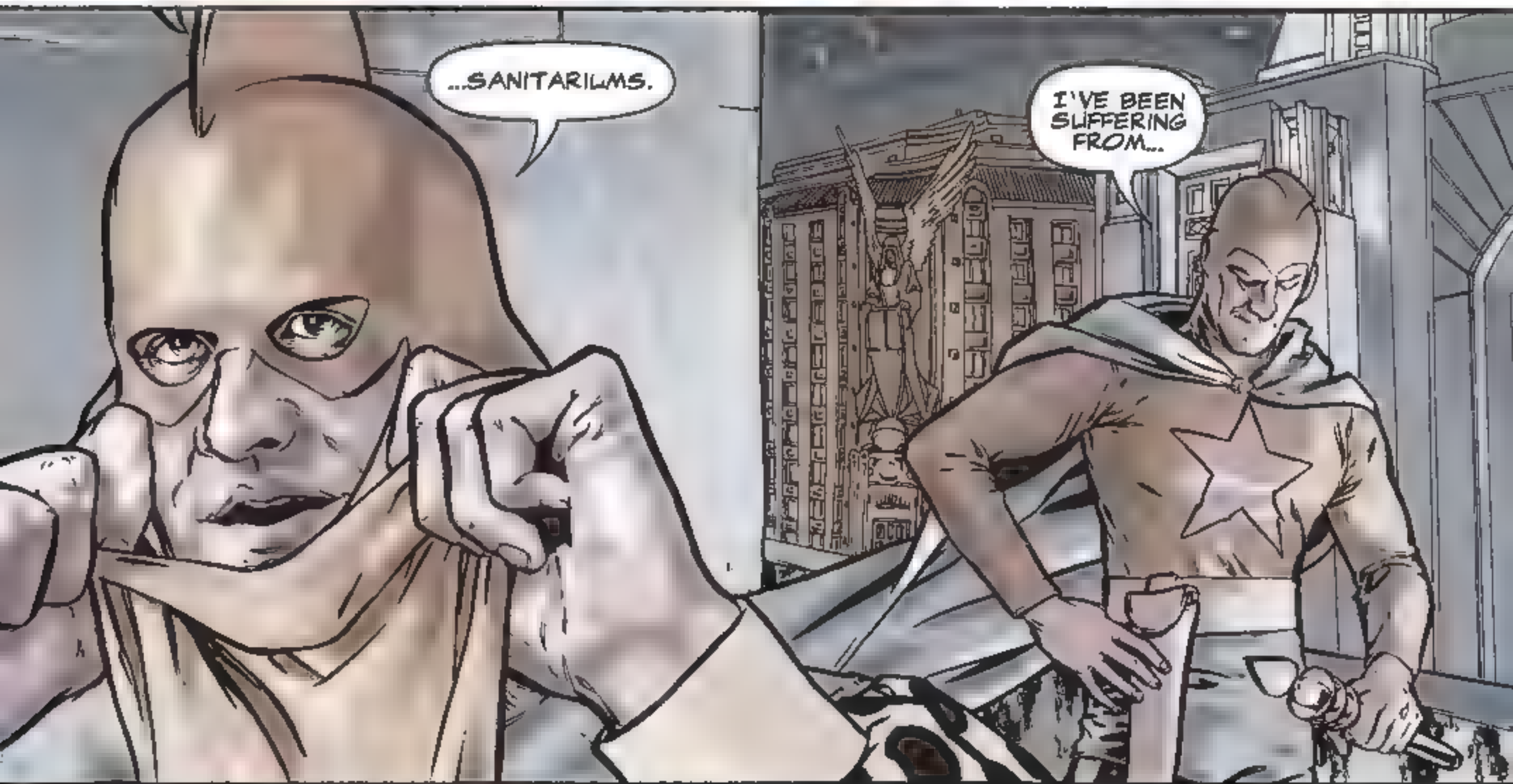




I UNCOVERED WHO YOU WERE USING LOGIC AND REASON.

I CROSS-REFERENCED OPAL CITY ASTRONOMERS WITH WEALTHY GUYS... PLAYBOYS... SEEING AS DEVELOPING THAT ROD OF YOURS MUST HAVE COST A BUNDLE.

THEN I NOTED YOUR ABSENCE. YOUR TIME AWAY FROM CRIMEFIGHTING...IT MIRRORED TED KNIGHT'S TIME SPENT IN...



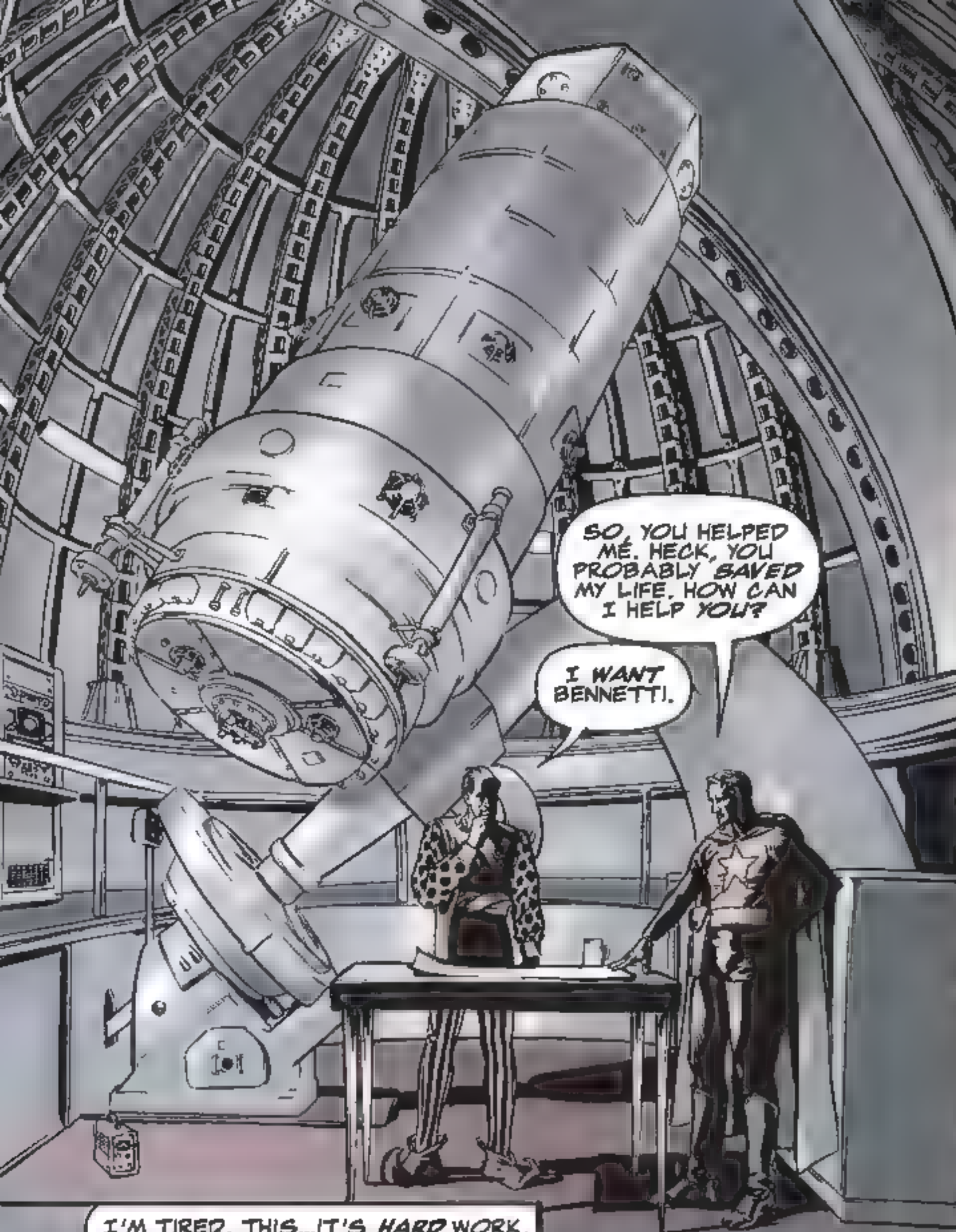
...SANITARILMS.

I'VE BEEN SUFFERING FROM...



...ANXIETY.

BUT...I THINK I'M BETTER.



SO, YOU HELPED ME. HECK, YOU PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

I WANT BENNETTI.



RELAX, EVERYONE. WE JUST WANT TO ASK THIS FELLOW SOMETHING.

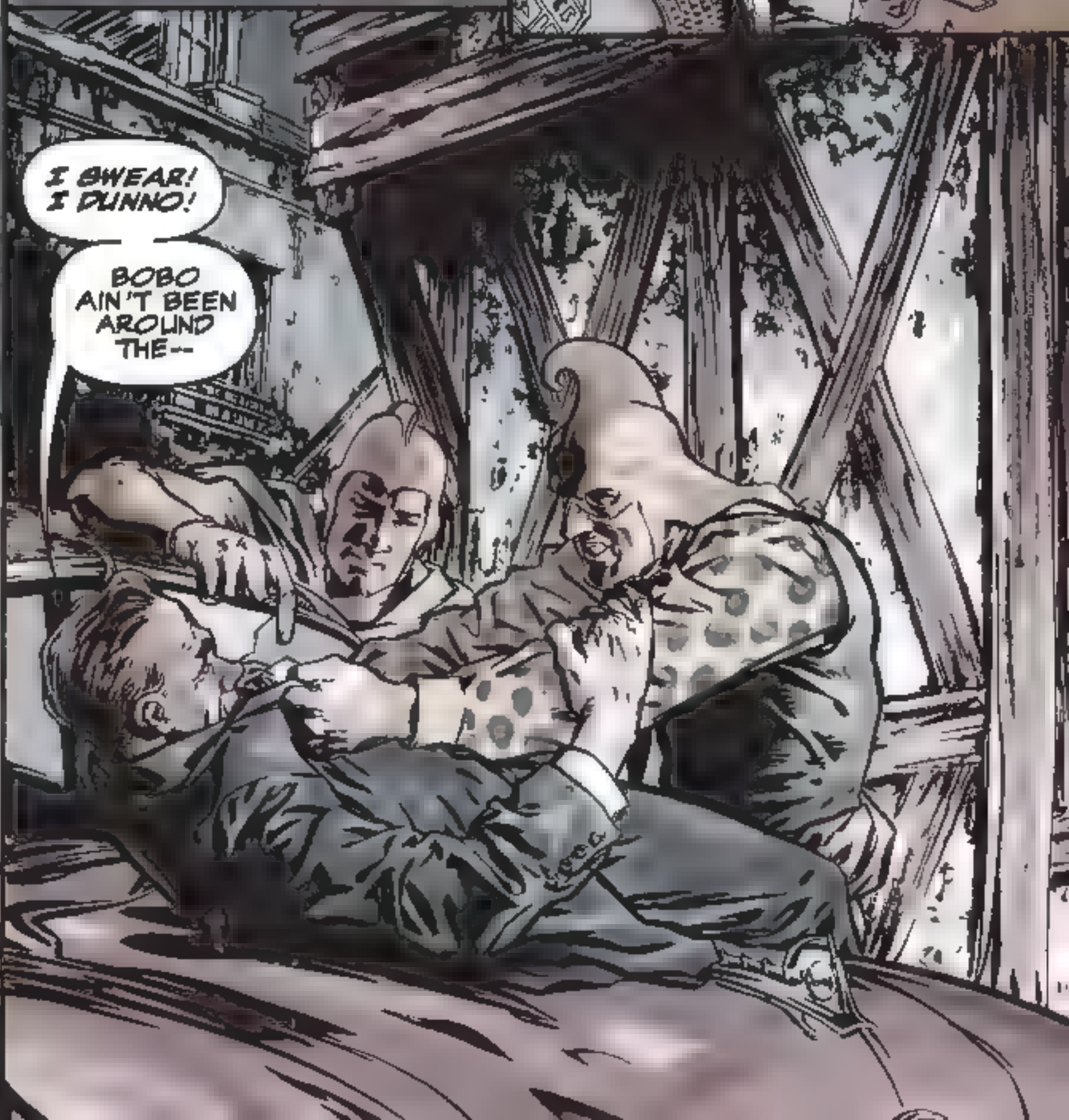
BOBO BENNETTI!!

I'M TIRED. THIS...IT'S HARD WORK, AFTER BEING AWAY SO LONG.



WHY DID YOU COME BACK AT ALL? MANY WHO LEFT THE SCENE AFTER 1950...THEY STAYED AWAY, YOU COULD HAVE.

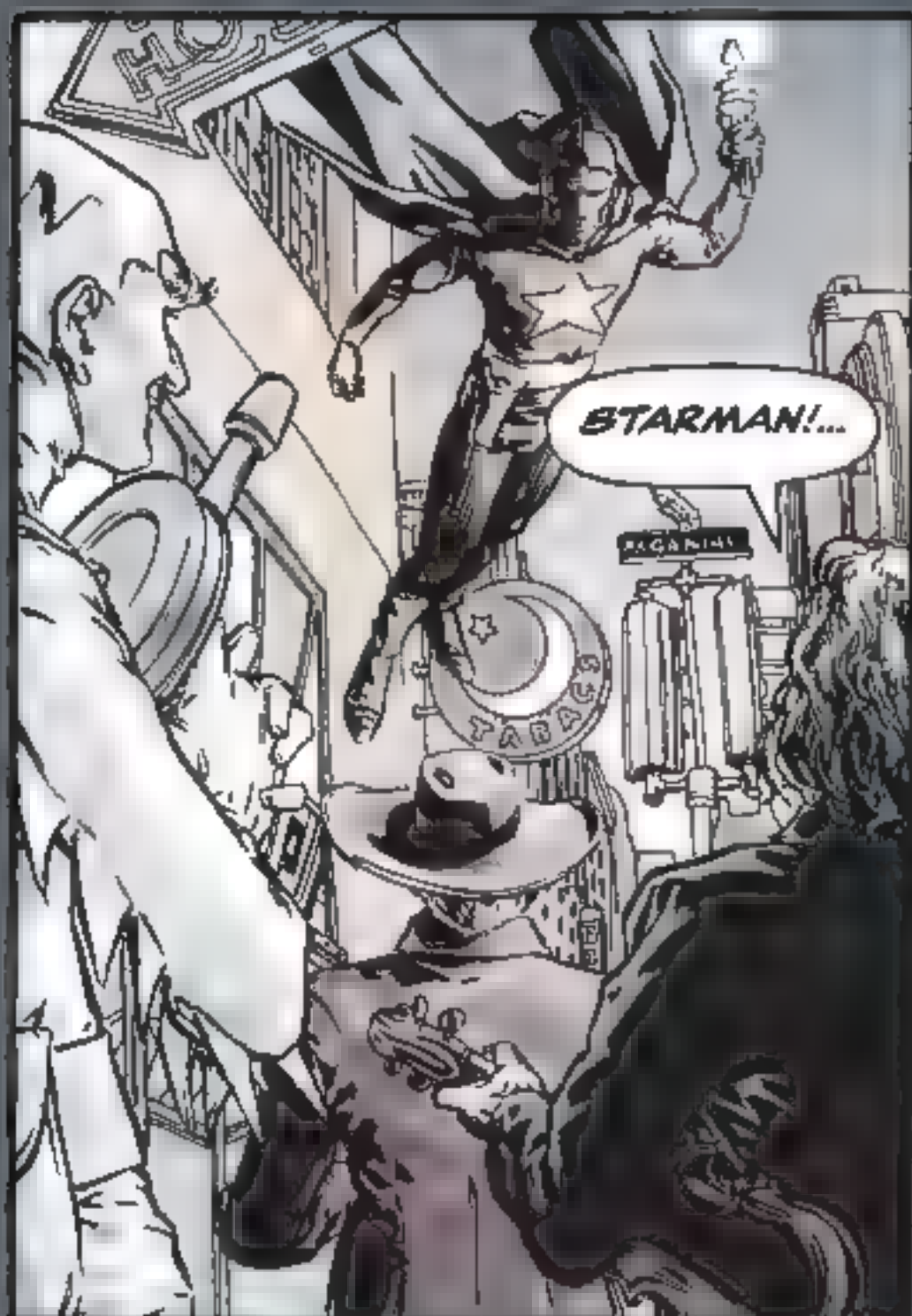
OPAL WOULDN'T LET ME.



I SWEAR! I DUNNO!

BOBO AIN'T BEEN AROUND THE--





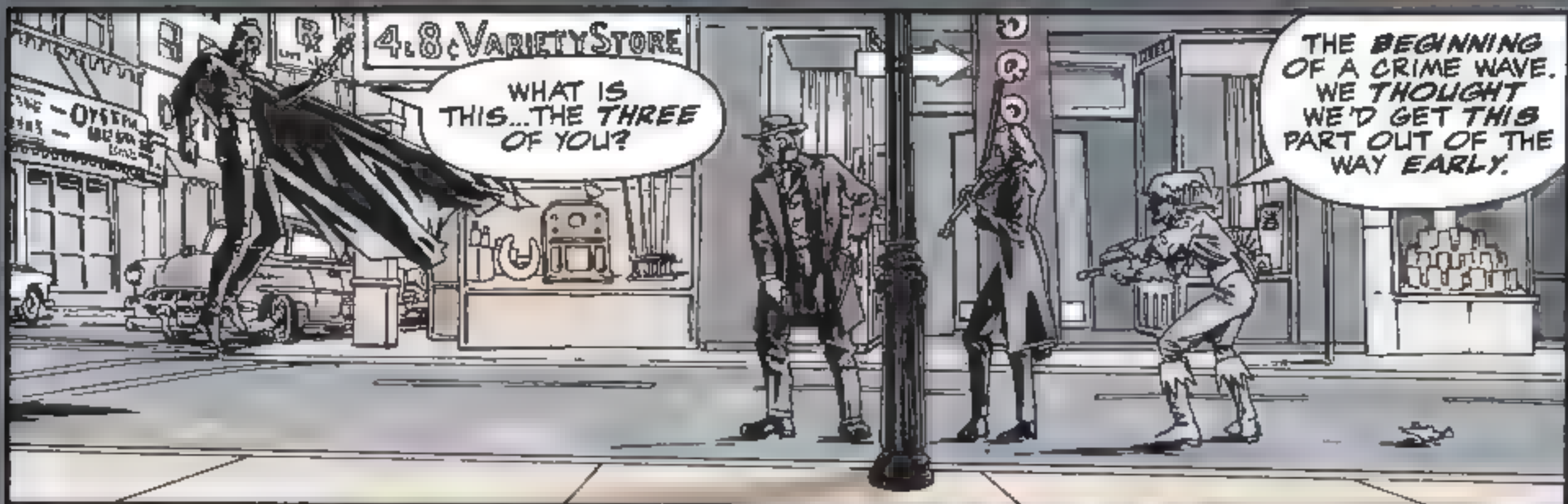
STARMAN!...



...NICE
OF YOU
TO GET
HERE.

FINALLY.

WHAT KEPT
YOU?



WHAT IS
THIS...THE THREE
OF YOU?

THE BEGINNING
OF A CRIME WAVE.
WE THOUGHT
WE'D GET THIS
PART OUT OF THE
WAY EARLY.



I HAVE
TO SAY AS A
WAGERING MAN, I
LIKE THESE ODDS.
THREE AGAINST
ONE.

AGAINST
TWO.

OH.



And so it began.

The dance. The familiar minuet that starts with no one leading or following...

...at first.


EASY.
ONE SHOT
SHOULD--



HUH?
WHO'S
STANDING
IN--



OH



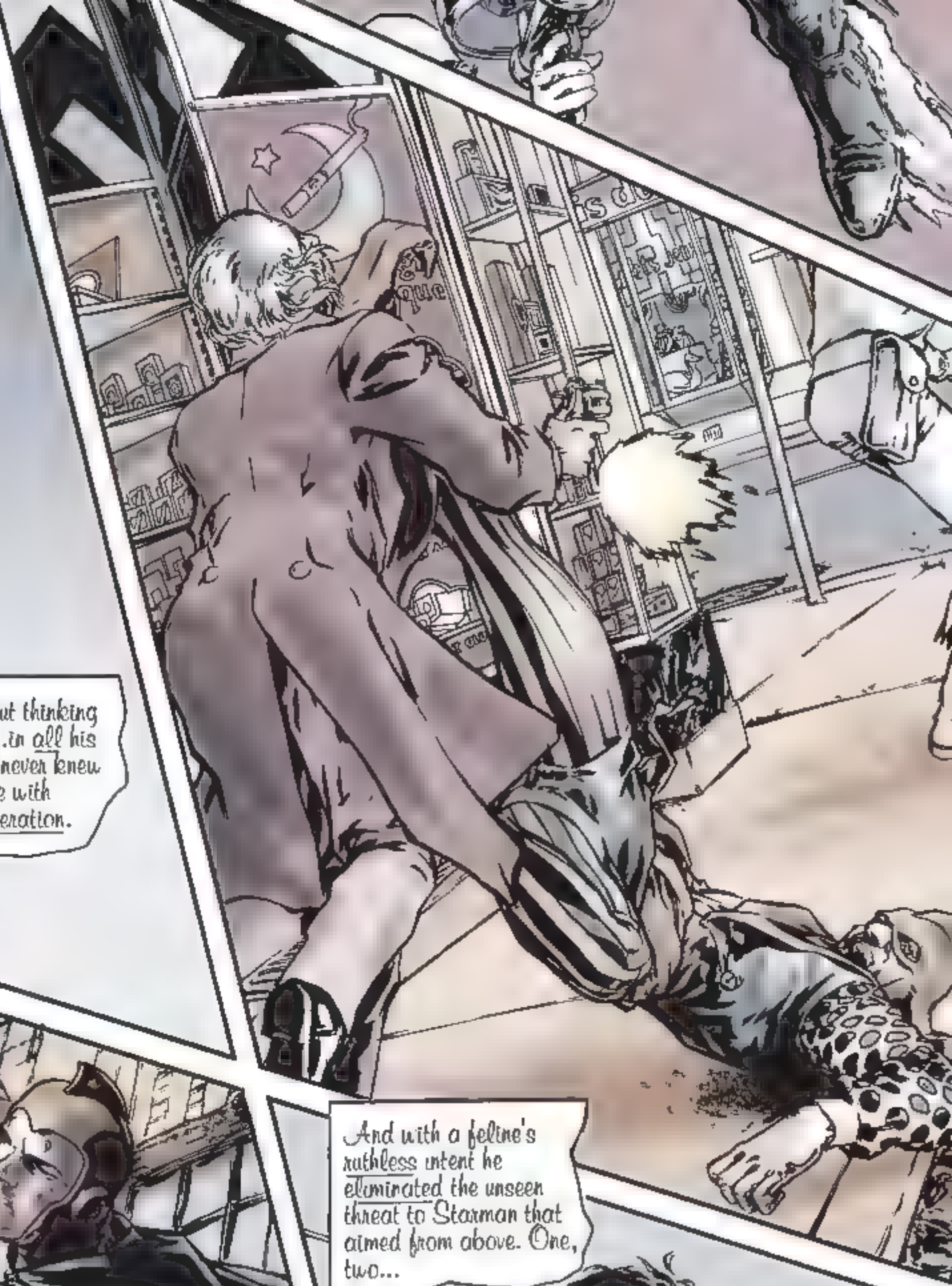
Bennetti moves with milky quickness when he has to. True, usually he saunters along like he's drunk one too many of those martinis he so enjoys...

But even in the present, now he's aged (ten years instead of the forty he should have) he moves with a lithe grace.

Back then...he was a cat
(as in feline, not swinger).



It's odd, but thinking
about him...in all his
crimes...I never knew
him to move with
such...desperation.



And with a feline's
ruthless intent he
eliminated the unseen
threat to Starmen that
aimed from above. One,
two...





...three...

...four.

But for all
Bennetti's intent,
that fifth...




...the fifth assassin was
a building too far.

GOD!
NO!

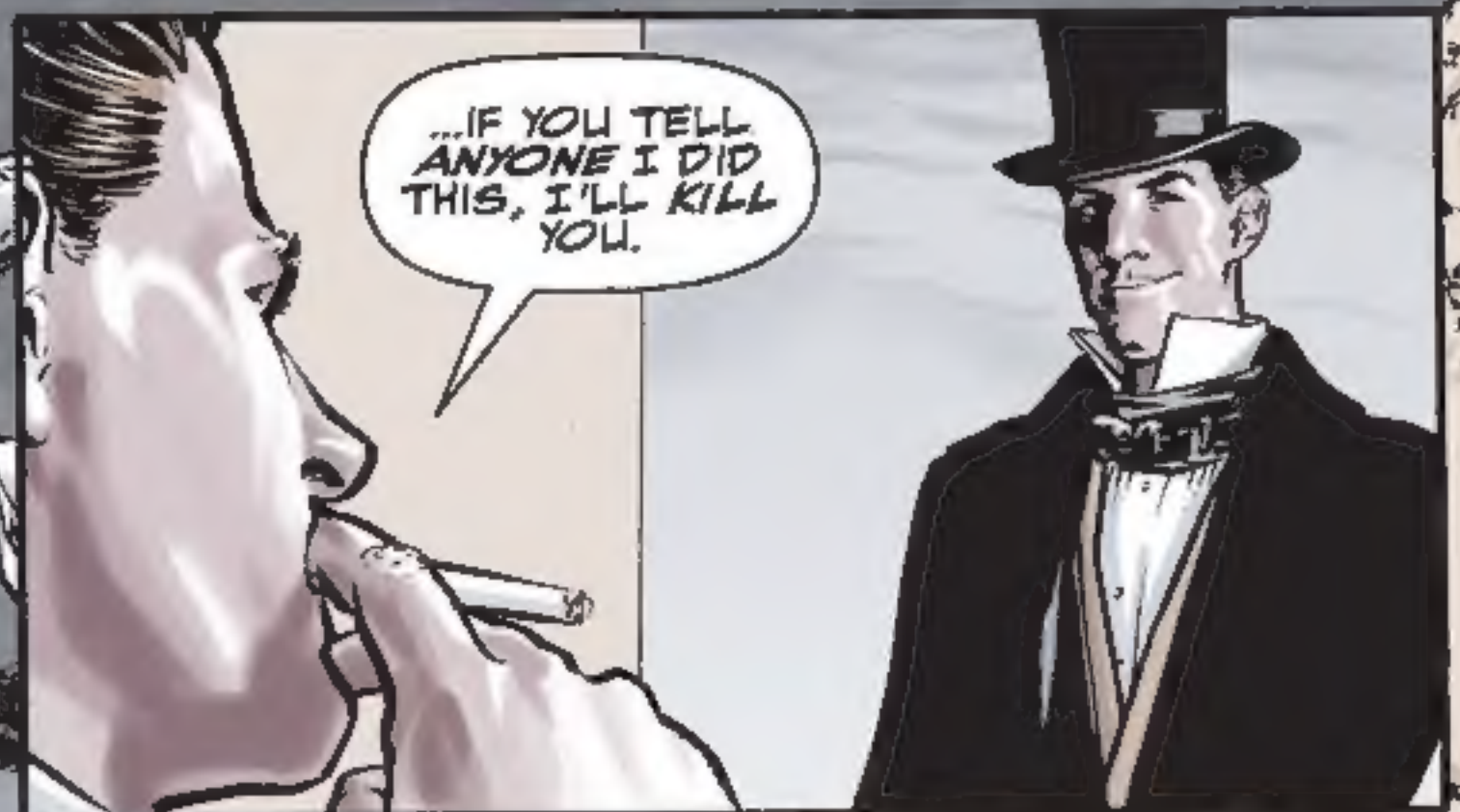
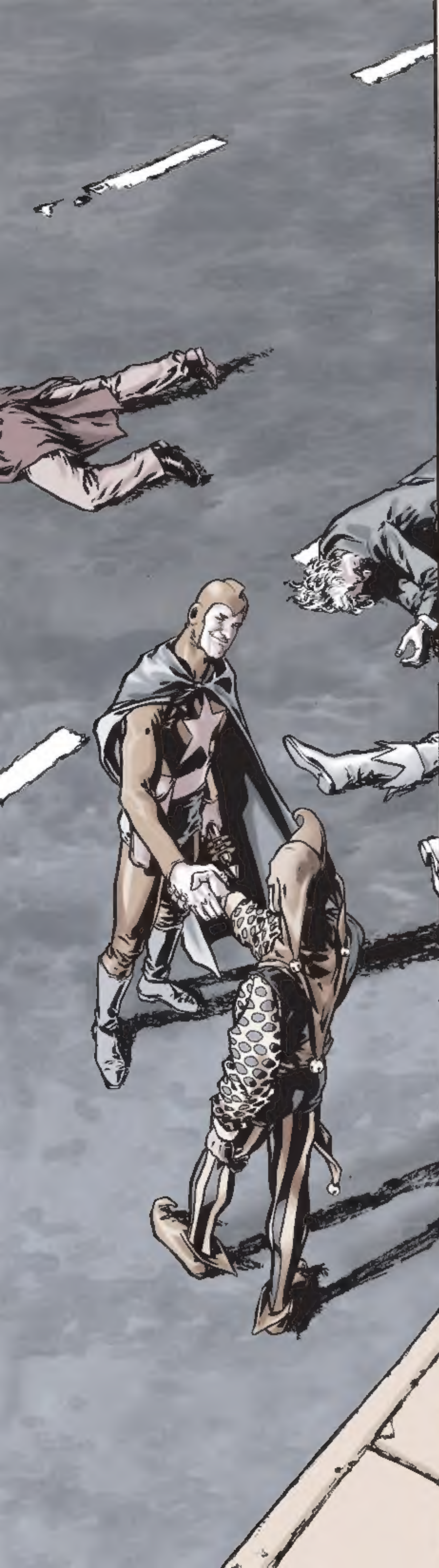
Funny how fate...





...or some other thing...
can intercede.

Sometimes.





The Jester never did find Bennett. Not then.

But six months later, Bennett committed thefts in Opal...and fought Starman because of it.

He was captured and jailed... at which time Detective Charles Lane appeared out of the ether...so to speak...

...extradition order in hand. And Bennett was finally charged with his New York crimes.



By which time the Jester had long since vanished from the public eye.

He was seldom missed.

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP